

Pizza Box Recycling Project Background

Is the pizza box project more funder driven than mission driven?

No. Since day one we've committed ourselves to working across the entire value chain – from communities to corporations to citizens. Acceptance and recyclability of pizza boxes is a common topic among residents and recycling programs- some accept, some don't, but many are not clear. Our goal is to provide data and data-backed resources. The pizza box recycling project was a start to our [Pathway to Circularity](#) initiative where we are bringing clarity to package fate, and when possible, we are helping move package design toward circularity. We start all projects with a stringent decision-making process to ensure our work aligns with our mission to improve the recycling system and advance circular economy. If you have data to contribute to mix, please do let us know.

Our mills don't want pizza boxes and will downgrade us for having them in bales. Why should we ask them to consider switching?

Not all recycling programs, MRFs, or mills are the same. If downgrading bales is specified in your contract, your mill may process a low volume or a narrow product list. As a practice, it is always good to reconfirm specs as the material stream and manufacturing are evolving. Most importantly, it is imperative for communities, MRFs, and mills to develop acceptability lists together. To assist with this discussion The Partnership has created a [Navigating Pizza Box Recyclability](#) document and companion resources to message clearly once a path is chosen and confirmed.

There was only one study done by one large mill, what about the smaller mills?

Our goal is to drive for collaboration to improve the system as a whole while also recognizing there are local variations. Recycling markets, and thus recycling rules, are local and regional. It is top priority to The Partnership that local programs are strong and we know all stakeholders' involvement is critical. Several studies were part of our decision to

- WestRock published a thoroughly reviewed and backed [study](#) on the effects of grease and cheese on recyclability of empty pizza boxes.
- In an American Forest & Paper Association (AF &PA) member [survey](#), members representing 93.6% of old corrugated containers consumed by member companies reported corrugated pizza boxes were accepted for recycling.
- [A 2019 Access Study](#) looked at programs across the country to determine the acceptability of pizza boxes in programs. In addition, The Partnership reached out to interview communities and MRFs across the country.
- The Recycling Partnership conducted a [national residents survey](#) which showed that 70% of residents say pizza boxes should be recycled and most say they are recycling them. While most say they are emptying the boxes, we know it is important to remind folks that all boxes should be EMPTY and our companion messaging allows communities to customize reminders.

How many mills does AF&PA represent?

[American Forest & Paper Association](#) (AF &PA) membership includes scores of companies and industry associations. Among them are Domtar, Essity, Evergreen Packaging, LLC, Georgia-Pacific LLC, Graphic Packaging International, Green Bay Packaging Inc., Greif, Inc., International Paper Company, Packaging Corporation of America, Pratt Industries, Inc., Resolute Forest Products, Sappi North America, Sonoco Products Company and WestRock Company.

The Recycling Partnership messaging says pizza boxes are recyclable and they are not acceptable in our program.

The Recycling Partnership continues to create a library of modular resources and tools to accommodate the varied programs across the country including the programs that accept and don't accept pizza boxes. The resources in our collection offer options that both include and exclude pizza boxes similar to other materials (e.g. glass or container deposit materials). Our tools and resources, including the social posts, are designed to be used as it fits the needs and acceptability list of programs.

As always, we value your comments and feedback. We work hard to provide the best data-backed resources possible. Thank you for your thorough investigation and dedication. Email us anytime at info@recyclingpartnership.org